Volume IV, Number 21. Week of November 22, 1943

New York

THEATRE CRITICS'

Reviews

1943

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†*"The Innocent Voyage" opened Monday, November 15th, at the Belasco Theatre.*
†*"Lady, Behave!" Opened Tuesday, November 16th, at the Cort Theatre.*
†*"A Connecticut Yankee" opened Wednesday, November 17th, at the Martin Beck Theatre.*
†*"Winged Victory" opened Saturday, November 20th, at the 44th Street Theatre.*

THEATRE CRITICS' REVIEWS IS A COMPLETE GUIDE AND RECORD TO THE NEW YORK SHOWS

Theater Critics' Reviews brings you the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York papers

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NEW YORK POST
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NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

Published by

CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS 235 East 22nd Street, New York, N. Y.

Yearly Subscription $15.00

"Winged Victory"

NEW YORK TIMES
November 22, 1943

THE PLAY IN REVIEW
"Winged Victory"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

IN "Winged Victory," which opened Saturday evening at the Forty-fourth Street, Moss Hart has written a stirring, moving and, what is more important, a most human play about the boy next door. Being that boy next door, the Army Air Forces act it with understanding, dignity, humor and warmth. Between them, they have given the theatre a play which should remain on Broadway for the usual enlistment period—the end of the war plus six months.

• • •

Mr. Hart offers no platform speeches about the bravery of the men who fly the Fortresses and the fighters. He sees them as individuals, each with a job to do, young Americans who, according to their temperaments, are laconic, anxious, thoughtful or casual. Some of them have families, some have girls; they come from different parts of the country and have different backgrounds. On two things all of them are agreed—they like to fly and they are determined their flights over the South Pacific and Europe shall not have been taken needlessly. As is the boy next door, they are heroes unknowingly.

When it sets out to put on a show—either here or there—the Army Air Forces does a thorough job. From training camps all over the country have come some 300 members of its personnel—a captain or two, lieutenants, sergeants, corporals, privates—some of whom have been known to the theatre, others not. There are no stars, and of the principal players many have only a few lines to say. Since "Winged Victory" also tells of the feminine side of the war, it has borrowed a number of civilian players to portray the mothers, sweethearts and the young wives who follow their husbands from camp to camp and are gallant and true heroes also.

• • •

It is a huge cast and a production which in fumbling hands well might sprawl all over Broadway, but neither the Air Forces nor Mr. Hart stand for amateur nonsense. In directing the play and grouping the singing choruses which are an integral part of the play, Mr. Hart has done a masterful job. Harry Horner, now with a "Sgt." before his name, has designed perfect settings for the drama's various incidents, and David Rose—also with a "Sgt."—has made the arrangements of the music. The scenes blend easily, and the play runs along as though General Arnold were himself standing backstage with a stop watch to see there is no delay. He may have been, at that.

The basic theme of "Winged Victory" is a simple one, merely following the training of the members of a bomber's crew. But the basic theme is not all there is to the play. For Mr. Hart has realized that for every man who is a pilot there also is a family back home, on a farm in Oregon, in Texas, in Brooklyn. He has written of the Air Forces, and of the war, from their point of view, as well as from that of the members of the crew, telling of the upheaval and worry, the hours of waiting for some message from the son or husband. He likes the members of his bomber's crew, and he likes their families, and the result is most warming in a theatre.

• • •

The opening scene of "Winged Victory" takes place in the author's favorite town of Mapleton, Ohio, a location which has come up in "The American Way," "Lady in the Dark" and "The Man Who Came to Dinner." It shows three youngsters, having joined the Air Forces, waiting for the letters which will tell them when to report. Presently they are in the barracks, beginning training along with others like themselves from various parts of the country. Some members of the group are "washed out" for physical or other reasons and the rest go on to become pilots or navigators.

In the second act the crew finally is assembled before the bomber it is to use and as its first action gives it the name of Winged Victory. There is a scene showing the wives of three members of the group, living together in Oakland and certain that, while no one had said anything about it, the bomber was about to leave. The final scene of the play is on a landing field on an island in the South Pacific when two members of the crew, battle worn and drooping with weariness, are taking their wounded gunner to the dressing station.

In telling his simple story of the impact of the war on average American people, Mr. Hart has kept it simple. He is aware that a casual air can be more effective than built-up drama and that in expressing himself the boy from the farm does not quote Plato. The play has a good many moving scenes which are moving because they are easy and filled with humor, leaving it to the audience to supply the implications. The parts of the play which are half humorous are far better than the few scenes which are outwardly serious.

The players, too, have kept their roles simple, the Air Forces obviously breeding group acting along with well coordinated bomber crews. There are some names which have been familiar to Broadway and screen audiences before they acquired the prefixes of AAF rank—Alan Baxter, Philip Bourneuf, Lee J. Cobb to mention but three—and the rest are new to the theatre but obviously should return to it after the war. Corp. Mark Daniels and Pfc. Edmond O'Brien have what are perhaps the leading roles, or, to narrow it down to just one point, Pfc. O'Brien has the leading role. He plays the part of the co-pilot from Brooklyn, a very great figure, both in the creation and acting.

• • •

But "Winged Victory" is not a play for individual performances, since all are good, from the three men who imitate the Andrews Sisters during a Christmas party in the South Pacific to the one who plays the Mayor of the little Oregon town when one of the crew members is married just before leaving for action. In the writing, the acting, the designing, the costumes by Sgt. Howard Shoup, the Feder lighting—now with a "Sgt." before it, and the choruses trained by Second Lieut. Leonard de Paur, a great deal of talent has gone into "Winged Victory." It shows it. The Army Emergency Relief Fund receives the money, but that fact is not the reason to see the play. It is a wonderful show.

NEW YORK SUN
November 22, 1943

Moss Hart's Air Forces Play, 'Winged Victory,' Is Truly Magnificent

By WARD MOREHOUSE

THE American theater rose to magnificence Saturday evening when, upon this island and in this town, "Winged Victory," Moss Hart's play for the United States Army Air Forces, had its premiere performance. Here is a thrilling show, a combination of play and spectacle that dwarfs all else of the current season and beside which the majority of productions of the present decade and century shrink to mediocrity.

"Winged Victory" is Mr. Hart's finest contribution to the Broadway stage. It is of the stature of Irving Berlin's "This Is the Army," but it has far more emotional strength. For it's a play, catching the spirit of the Air Forces, that takes young men from the comfortable homes and back porches of midland America and sends them on the big hop to the steaming and tangled jungles of the South Pacific, where war is in the skies and hovering on every side.

It's a play of the yearnings and the dreams of men who want to fly, who do fly—of the triumphs and disappointments, the tears and jeers and cheers, the gusty humors, the grippings, the loyalties, the heartbreaks, the living and the dying of the men of the Air Forces, now flying and fighting in so many parts of the world.

Mr. Hart, with great warmth, poignancy and understanding, writes of the young men, drawn from all walks of civilian life, who are the cadets and combat flyers of this hour and of this war. He writes of boys from small towns of the prairie States, from the tall timber country of the Northwest, from the oil fields of Texas, from the streets of the great cities. He shows their evolution from huddled, raw recruits—and how raw they are!—to finished human products for the waging of war—pilots, bombardiers, navigators, waist gunners, tail gunners, belly gunners, radio operators, all needed to take our giant Fortresses into the skies of combat. He writes, too, of the boys who make it and those who are washed out in training; those who die, and those who fight on.

The principal characters in "Winged Victory" are six young men you might now meet at any United States air base in the vast combat area of the South Pacific: Allan, who worked in a bank, and his two friends, Pinky, who was a barber, and Frankie, a chemist, all of Mapleton, Ohio; Bobby, who was on a farm in Oregon; Dave, whose father has six Texas oil wells, and Irving, who is from the sidewalks of Brooklyn, and who will tell you about it. You follow these six to the induction field, through classification and processing, to the lecture halls, the examination rooms, to their solo-flying fields (which also have their tragedies), to the graduation exercises, to their farewell before the big hop and to the camouflaged terrain of those islands which once belonged only to the geographies, but which now give the world Page One news.

In "Winged Victory" you make with Mr. Hart, scene by scene, the journey from a sunlit Ohio back yard to the dense green growth of an unnamed Pacific island. Mr. Hart's writing, always incisive and frequently brilliant, so truly catches the atmosphere and feeling of each particular scene, the staging and the lighting are so well done, that there are moments when the play becomes almost more than you can take. The scene in which the cadets are undergoing the steadiness-under-pressure test, the test of the winking lights, is an ordeal for every person in the audience, and I doubt if many passed. I definitely did not.

Mr. Hart has done his own staging, and be proud of it. The lighting is by the expert Feder, and Sgt. Horner's settings give exactness of locale and mood in depicting a hotel room in Oakland, occupied by the flyers' young wives, who want to be with them and near them to the very last instant; the bulging red barn of plenty in the apple-blossom country of Oregon, the great American desert, which has been skinned and cleared and populated by these eager young men, these eager beavers, who have learned to fly the monstrous machines of modern combat.

"Winged Victory" is splendidly acted. The men of this overwhelming cast of more than 300 belong to the personnel of the Air Forces, and they look it and act it. There is great believability about the songs and shoutings of the barrack street, the rough and tough camaraderie of the barrack washroom, the quiet exchange of confidences of young men in a jungle hell, with blood and agony all about them, and given to wondering if all the death and dying will bring a better world, a made-over world, for their own children being born in their absence.

There is not space here to give individual citations to all members of this "Winged Victory" cast who so truly deserve them. It must be recorded, however, that Corporal Mark Daniels is remarkably right for the leading role of Allan, the boy from the Ohio back porch who flies off to the wars. He is indeed an able young actor, making his first appearance on the Broadway stage. There are excellent performances from Edmond O'Brien, Barry Nelson, Alan Baxter, Dick Hogan, Don Taylor, Peter Lind Hayes, Philip Bourneuf and Sgt. Rune Hultman, as the boy from Texas—big, big Texas. And beautiful work, too, from Elisabeth Fraser and Phyllis Avery, as young wives of the cadets. Miss Fraser, trained by Lunt and Fontanne, reveals power which I have frequently suspected she had.

"Winged Victory" is exalted stuff. It is a memorable event. It is, I repeat, magnificent. It brings to Moss Hart a new and an enormous prestige, and pays its tribute to the glory of the Air Forces. It will probably come to be regarded as the greatest single build-up the flying machine has had since the Wrights rose above the sands of Kitty Hawk forty Decembers ago.

So, with "Winged Victory" duly installed at the Forty-fourth Street Theater, the New York drama, along with the ever-vocal young men of the B-24s and B-17s, now soars into the wild blue yonder of better and greater things.

"Winged Victory"

NEW YORK POST
November 22, 1943

Moss Hart and the Army Airmen Score a Hit With "Winged Victory"

By WILELLA WALDORF

AFTER an exploratory tour of the country's flying fields in a bomber, Moss Hart has written a new play called "Winged Victory," which tells the absorbing, sometimes almost heartbreaking story of the air-minded boys from American banks, farms, drug stores and barber shops, who learn to pilot war planes in a little over a year's training, and go forth to battle while the folks at home wait and worry and listen to the radio calmly reporting: "Thirty-three of our aircraft failed to return."

"Winged Victory" was produced in impressive fashion at the 44th Street Theatre last Saturday night by the United States Army Air Forces with a large cast of soldiers, many of whom were Broadway actors only a few short months ago, and the technical assistance of all sorts of erstwhile theatre experts now in uniform. Proceeds go to Army Emergency Relief.

Unlike Irving Berlin's "This Is the Army," produced so successfully on Broadway last year, "Winged Victory" is not a musical revue, but a play employing actresses in the feminine roles instead of soldiers dressed up, and telling a story embellished with band music, singing and occasional stunts, but primarily a realistic drama of life in the Air Forces.

A Play, Not a Revue

Despite the fact that it is a large scale production officially put on under military supervision, it is more closely allied to Maxwell Anderson's war play, "The Eve of St. Mark," than it is to Mr. Berlin's Army extravaganza, now playing in London.

Apparently Mr. Hart was tremendously impressed with what he learned on his aerial tour of America, and his study of what goes on in the training centers and flying fields. He has managed to convey the spirit and power of our rapidly expanding Air Forces and at the same time to catch the eager, human quality of the horde of young cadets hoping to become pilots.

Mr. Hart is not the sort of playwright who trots out the flag at intervals for an orgy of easy emotionalism plugged with patriotic tunes. By simply telling the story of half a dozen air-minded boys and what happens to them in their struggle to win their "wings," he manages to say more about this war and what must come out of it than any number of hysterical breast-pounders dispensing high-sounding platitudes. His stage direction is as easy and unaffected as his writing.

The Army Air Forces have assigned some of Broadway's most talented young men, now in uniform, to aid Mr. Hart in developing his theme. Sgt. Harry Horner's scenery is as effective as it is speedily shifted. Sgt. David Rose's large orchestra takes a spirited part in the proceedings, playing music suitably composed or arranged by Sgt. Rose himself. The chorus under Lieut. Leonard de Paur is a good one, and who should be in charge of the lighting but that Broadway expert, Sgt. Abe Feder himself.

Since the cast of "Winged Victory" takes up several pages of program space, just for those in speaking parts, with half a hundred more lending atmosphere, and a bevy of soldiers' wives, mothers and sisters impersonating WACs, etc., it is possible to mention only a few of the players, while reporting that the company in general is excellent.

The six boys who go through their training as cadets together are attractively played by Cpl. Mark Daniels, Pfc. Edmond O'Brien, Pfc. Barry Nelson, Pvt. Dick Hogan, Pvt. Don Taylor and Sgt. Rune Hultman.

Brothers in Uniform

In a comp[illegible] full of familiar faces, Pvt. Philip Bourneuf appears as an understanding colonel, Pvt. Lee J. Cobb turns up in the final scene as a sympathetic Army doctor, with Pvt. Red Buttons, Pvt. Alan Baxter, Pvt. Whitner Bissell, Pfc. Anthony Ross, Pvt. Damian O'Flynn, Sgt. Ray Middleton, Pvt. Alfred Ryder, Staff Sergeant Peter Lind Hayes, Pvt. Karl Malden, Lt. Donald Beddoe and many others contributing helpful characterizations.

During the Christmas entertainment on a South Pacific Isle, Pvt. Jack Powell, Jr. takes to his father's famous drumsticks, Staff Sergeant Sascha Brastoff offers a side-splitting impersonation of Carmen Miranda, draped in frying pans, and three gentlemen we had trouble identifying from the program present a cheerful take-off on the Andrews Sisters in grass skirts, with microphones.

The leading feminine roles are done pleasantly enough by Phyllis Avery, Olive Deering and Elisabeth Fraser.

But it's chiefly an Airman's show, and a stirring one.

'WINGED VICTORY'

A play by Moss Hart directed by Mr. Hart, with settings by Sergeant Harry Horner, costumes by Sergeant Howard Shoup, original music and arrangements by Sergeant David Rose and lighting by Sergeant Abe Feder, presented by the United States Army Air Forces on Saturday evening, November 20, 1943, at the Forty-fourth Street Theatre, with proceeds going to Army Emergency Relief.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
November 22, 1943

'Winged Victory' a Triumph for the Army, Moss Hart and Us, Too

By JOHN CHAPMAN

THE U. S. Army Air Forces drama, "Winged Victory," lives up to advance notices. It is big, but simple. It is thrilling, yet tender. It is funny and it will make you weep. It shows, without any sloppy hoorah, what it takes to become an airman in the USAAF, and when, at the conclusion, the big band plays and the huge cast sings "The Star-Spangled Banner," your throat gets tight and your scalp prickles and you buzz with pride.

You are proud of the Air Forces as a great war machine; proud of the country that builds it; proud of the two or three hundred men, who look so clean and so young, who take part in the play; proud of Moss Hart, who wrote and directed it . . . and even proud of yourself, just for sitting there. If the army wants to do something for Mr. Hart it could make him a general or something.

The Saturday night premiere at the 44th St. Theatre drew an impressive audience of Army and Navy big shots and their ladies; of financiers, of celebrities who are not habitual first-nighters; and it also drew most of the regulars. At curtain-call they all cheered the soldier players and the civilian actresses, and they kept on cheering and yelling for the author until Moss Hart came to the stage.

Hart's curtain speech was simple: "I have just heard over the radio that Berlin has been bombed. That's what this play is about."

Soldiers Being Soldiers

"Winged Victory"—well, let's get things started by pronouncing it right. The title is the name of a B-17 Flying Fortress, and the soldiers who name her call her Wing'd Victory, and not the poetic Wing-ed.

"Winged Victory" is not soldiers giving a show, as was Irving Berlin's "This Is the Army." It is soldiers being soldiers; young men showing just how it is that they become airmen, and just how it is on Christmas Day with a few pitiful presents in a cardboard box on a South Pacific Island. So good are the acting and the writing that you quickly forget this is theatre; these men are real and what is happening to them is real.

It has been proved before now that Mr. Hart is an able playwright. "Winged Victory" now proves that he is also a splendid reporter. Into seventeen scenes he has put not only a play, but also a report to the nation—a report that shows, better than any propaganda one-reel films I ever saw, just how it is that a bunch of plane-crazy kids become combat teams in the Air Forces in fifteen months of training. No matter how much you have read and how many radio fortune-tellers you have listened to, you will know more about this man's and woman's war after having seen this play.

Story of Six Boys

It is, as I said, big, but simple. There are seventeen scenes mounted on five revolving stages—but the scenery never intrudes. It is quietly and properly a background. There are perhaps 300 men in the company, and forty-two women—but they are used with good judgment and never are an overpowering mob. Neither sets nor squadrons interfere with the little story of six plane-loony youngsters who get into the Air Forces and go through the mill.

Three of these lads are from Ohio, one is from Oregon, another from Texas, and the sixth from Brooklyn. One is killed in a training flight; another is rejected in training, but reappears as a gunner. Some are already married, one marries. One is already a father, and one gets the news on a steaming air field in the South Pacific that he has a son. The concluding scene is these two fathers, sweaty, tired and scared, getting ready for another bombing mission and hoping that what they are doing will somehow make a new world for their babies.

I'd like to hug Moss Hart because he has done such a fine job. His good taste never wavers, nor does his playwright's sense of pace and contrast. He has caught the seriousness and thoroughness of Air Forces training; he has caught the robust humor and the deep comradeship of military life; he has caught the love and heartache and gallantry of ordinary people who get into a war. One of his scenes, of three wives in a dingy Oakland, Calif., hotel room—three girls who can hear their husbands' planes taking off from San Francisco for the South Pacific—is as moving and beautifully written a scene as could be imagined.

Casting by the Army

The casting is something that only the Army can do. It has millions of men, so all it has to do is pick out the right ones. Credits for all performances would take many paragraphs, but mention must be made of Corp. Mark Daniels, Pvts. Dick Hogan, Don Taylor, Barry Nelson and Edmond O'Brien, and Sgt. Rune Hultman. They are the central characters and they are all fine. O'Brien, in the role of the Brooklyn boy, was a first-night favorite, for to him fell a first-class comedy role.

Excellent, too, are Phyllis Avery, Elisabeth Fraser and Olive Deering as the wives, who have had so little and now have nothing.

There are many specialties—dances and comedy turns which space prevents enumerating. The sets, by Sgt. Harry Horner, are excellent. The orchestra, led by Sgt. David Rose, is big and competent, and Rose's between-scenes musical transitions are intelligent and helpful in keeping the play together and keeping it moving.

The proceeds of "Winged Victory" go to Army Emergency Relief. They will be huge, and your money will be in the pot.

"Winged Victory"

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
November 22, 1943

Moss Hart's 'Winged Victory' Has Great Audience Appeal

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

IN *Winged Victory* Moss Hart has written a great piece of popular theater. Its theme is the role of the Air Forces in the war, and it treats it in simple, understandable, emotional terms. It is largely a show, and Mr. Hart has made it much more of one with his brilliant directing. It is partly a spectacle, and Sgt. Harry Horner has greatly enhanced the spectacle with his splendid sets. It is essentially a salute, and a big Army band under Sgt. David Rose makes the salute more resounding. *Winged Victory* belongs utterly to the moment—not merely the moment in history, but also the moment when you sit before it. Its force starts evaporating as you exit. But it is so wholly divorced from art that I suppose it is partly exempted from criticism.

To a remarkable extent, *Winged Victory* is much less about war than youth. The whole tone of the play is boyish, even Rover-Boyish, for which there is the excuse that the Air Force, unlike the rest of the Army, *is* made up of kids. That is why the first half of *Winged Victory*, which follows cadets from their induction to their graduation, is infinitely the better half. For Mr. Hart is writing of kids at school—a very serious school, but a school for all that. The school, like any other, has its ritual, its traditions, its ideal of comradeship; and Mr. Hart's youngsters are fired by the romance and imbued with the gallantry in them. The stakes are far higher, but his kids' worries about passing their tests or their excitement over getting their wings differs only in degree, not kind, from making the football team or winning your letter.

• • •

I think this was the real story Moss Hart had to tell, not only because it has its own inherent form and unity, but because it is what he had himself observed and directly responded to. When he pictures a teeming, lively scene of general camp life, or a scene where kids are told they have been washed out of the Force, or the full-stage spectacle of a graduation, one is touched or exhilarated. Mr. Hart's kids may be far too uniformly decent and starry-eyed. But they are youth, even if they are not very convincing as young people; and youth has its own kind of poignancy.

The second half of *Winged Victory*, which takes its fliers to the South Pacific, is a different kind of story, and a much more fumbling and fictional one. Here reality can't be so blithely ignored, and Mr. Hart never achieves it. Here, too, an emotional pattern is repeated with sharply diminishing returns. Such situations as boys about to take off for the Pacific and young wives left behind in shabby hotel rooms emerge as the merest stereotypes. In his South Pacific scenes Mr. Hart scrupulously avoids the rank melodrama of *The Eve of St. Mark*, but by the same token he sidesteps all the grimness of war. His warriors remain nice schoolboys to the end.

What is best about *Winged Victory* is that it is always simple; if at bottom much of it is corny, none of it is fancy or pretentious. What is worst about it is that it has nothing whatever to say. It is simply emotional entertainment.

• • •

In staging the show, with its immense cast and many scenes, Mr. Hart faced a stupendous job which he mastered completely. As a production, *Winged Victory* could hardly be bettered. If there are no standout performances, the general level of acting is good. In the larger roles Cpl. Mark Daniels, Pfc. Edmond O'Brien, Pvt. Dick Hogan, Pvt. Don Taylor, Pvt. Philip Bourneuf, Pvt. Lee Cobb, and Phyllis Avery and Olive Deering all come through with honor. And the band plays with martial Schmaltz, never more so than in rendering the old Yale "Whiffenpoof" song or the rousing anthem of the Air Force.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
November 22, 1943

A Great War Play

By HOWARD BARNES

IN "Winged Victory" Moss Hart and the Army Air Forces have collaborated in a great and profoundly moving war play. As a tribute to our flyers it has heroic proportions, beyond that, it has the heart and meaning of fine drama, brought to consummate realization on a stage. The author has taken a huge canvas for his work, but he has written with such simplicity, passion and artistry that its effect is always immediate and personal. The cast of 300 uniformed men and their civilian colleagues plays with brilliant authority and it has been given superlative technical assistance. In short, a major theatrical event took place at the Forty-fourth Street Theater Saturday evening.

• • •

The size of the company, the five revolving stages and the seventeen scenes which span the career of an aviator from a small town in Ohio to the ultimate challenge of war might have led one to expect a mere or less jumbled and unwieldy pageant. Miraculously, "Winged Victory" is never that. On the contrary, it is fluent and dramatically precise, weaving huge ensembles into an integrated and individualized story; combining wonderful comedy with scenes of almost intolerable emotional tension, and exploiting a fine musical accompaniment to superb and proper effect. The war has inspired powerful shows on the stage and on the screen, but nothing to match this Army Air Forces presentation.

• • •

Hart, as you have doubtless heard, did a stupendous job of preparation for the play, flying thousands of miles to various training schools and spending more than half a year in pounding his impressions into dramatic form. He has done his job magnificently. The play starts with the "Eager Beavers" in a Mid-West community, waiting for their acceptance to training school. It takes them through barracks, examination rooms, classification rooms and the final ceremony of awarding wings. There were those on Saturday night who were fearful that the show would let down after this stirring climax to the first act, but the succeeding seven scenes build surely to a crescendo which is certain to leave you limp and exalted.

• • •

For Hart has not fashioned a cursory stage documentary of training for the United States Army Air Forces. He has leavened every scene with the deep human hungers and fears, which give purpose to our fighting, and conviction to an artistic reflection of the courage and agony which it entails. It is difficult to single out individual episodes for special mention. They are all right as rain and engrossing. Suffice it to note that the Classification Center interludes are extraordinarily dramatic, that an Oregon wedding scene is tremendously affecting, that a Christmas Eve show on a South Pacific island is uproariously funny and that the terrible climax, in which survivors of the "Eager Beavers" look deep into their souls, is supremely restrained and moving.

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The players, with few exceptions, were not well known in the theater before they joined the air forces. Nevertheless, they could not possibly be bettered. Corporal Mark Daniels is particularly fine as the eventual pilot of the bomber he names "Winged Victory"; Private First Class Edmond O'Brien, Private Don Taylor and Private Dick Hogan give incisive characterizations of his buddies while Elisabeth Fraser and several other actresses add immeasurably to the force of the play. Incidentally the settings by Sergeant Harry Horner are admirably suited to Hart's brilliant and imaginative staging and Sergeant David Rose's musical score is evocative and correctly supplementary to the stage action. "Winged Victory" is a fine war play, a fine play and a stupendous piece of theater. It gives incomparable distinction to the season.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
November 22, 1943

Winged Victory Presents Thrilling Spectacle

By BURTON RASCOE

ABOUT all a mere drama reviewer can say about Winged Victory is: See it if you can. It is a thrilling spectacle, full of emotional drive. It is spine-tingling and it wrenches your heart. It is earthy and glamorous, ribald and romantic, tragic and glorious, and it is instructive. Superbly mounted, brilliantly directed and skillfully played, it is a tableau of practically every phase of Army Air Force life from enlistment to combat, its total effect immeasurably aided by a 47 piece AAF orchestra under the direction of Sgt. David Rose.

The show, written and directed by Moss Hart, opened on Saturday night at the 44th St. Theater before a grateful and enthusiastic audience in which there was such a heavy sprinkling of celebrities from stage, screen, social, political and army and navy life that a vast mob of spectators gathered outside the theater in 44th St. to watch them emerge. Author and cast of 300 members of the Army Air Forces and 51 civilian women, including cadet wives, took curtain calls for 15 minutes.

The play begins with three boys in a small Ohio town—one a barber's apprentice to his father, another a young married clerk in a bank and the third a chemist whose father is a colonel in the Army Air Corps. They are discovered on the lawn of the bank clerk's home impatiently waiting for letters notifying them to report for induction training in the Army Air Corps, in which they have all three enlisted and speculating on what it will be like after they get in.

Griping Continues

Thereafter you have a sequence of 17 scenes from the process of induction to combat flying. The rough and ribald camaraderie of barracks life, where every private exercises the American soldier's God-given right to gripe, proceeds from the rassing and spoofing the raw and awkward rookies get, from those still in the manual-labor phase of their training, through their routine of songs such as:

The biscuits in the army they say are mighty fine,
One rolled off a table and killed a pal of mine.
Oh, I don't want any more of army life;
Get, Mom, I want to go home!

From beefing and horseplay the tableaux proceed from cadets taking gruelling co-ordination tests under incredibly nerve-wracking hazards to men tragically washed out by the examining board for slight, hitherto unperceived physical deficiencies and on to the impressive ceremony of the presentation of wings to a graduating class. There are interludes of partings and glimpses of cadet wives ganged up in miserable rooms near training fields to be with their husbands as long as possible. There is the class tragedy when a pilot crashes and the joy of a bombing crew in naming its ship. There is a Christmas overseas with vaudeville entertainment by amateurs of an outfit; news of pilots becoming papas; then the tragic realities of warfare—with the courageous spirit prevailing in tme of greatest funk.

If you can't get tickets to Winged Victory you can buy the text of the play for $2 in an edition just published by Random House. The words are there; but, of course, it is not the same as seeing the show.

"Winged Victory"

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
November 22, 1943

'Winged Victory' Comes to 44th St.

By ROBERT GARLAND

THE "Winged Victory" is masterly. . . . What Moss Hart has created for the Army Air Corps is a word-and-music show so honest, so colorful, so replete with bravery and fears, laughter and tears, that it reaches deep down into the human heart and disturbs it. Not in all your theatre-going days have you seen and heard a make-believe with so emotional an impact, with so uncanny a power to stir up the best that, as an American, is in you.

With the blessing, and assistance, of our Army Air Forces, Mr. Hart has passed a major on-stage miracle, a miracle locally made manifest night-before-last at the 44th Street Theatre. Seldom have I seen an audience, especially a first-night audience, more genuinely stirred, more openly moved and appreciative.

After a professional first-nighter has been confronted with word-and-music shows—good, better, best—such, let us say, as "What's Up" and "Artists and Models," "Kiss and Tell" and "A Connecticut Yankee," "Oklahoma" and "One Touch of Venus," along comes "Winged Victory" and leaves him practically without a superlative. All he can do is return to "masterly" and work his way from that.

In most of the newspapers, and all the souvenir programs at the 44th Street Theatre, Moss Hart has related how "Winged Victory" came to be written, how young Lt. Lazar approached him in the Oak Room of the Plaza and suggested that he was the only one to do it. The Lieutenant, a combination of Little Eva and the Bethlehem Steel Company, meant what he said.

Out of this request came a follow-up from Gen. Arnold, Commanding General of our Army Air Forces. And, out of this follow-up, came an airplane, a crew and a firm but polite suggestion that Moss Hart get himself on board and learn all about the A.A.F.

This he did. And quickly! The stunningly effective, deeply moving, all-American piece at the 44th St. Theatre is the direct result of Mr. Hart's sightseeing, Mr. Hart's adaptability, Mr. Hart's ability to learn, Mr. Hart's powers of observation and Mr. Hart's great, and hitherto hidden, skill as a simple-hearted playwright. He wrote "Winged Victory" with his emotions.

There's every reason why he should have.

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In this Army Air Force epic for once, I can use the word "epic" honestly—Moss Hart has told the story of three quite ordinary American boys who come from one small country town and three others who come from elsewhere. One, as you might know, comes from Brooklyn. He, I am happy to report, is among the finest, the most likeable, Mr. Hart leaves them, alive or dead, in the South Pacific.

Ever so often, he turns to the women, their mothers and their sisters, their wives and their girl friends, and a couple of ladies without the gates. There is also an unforgettable scene between three wives alone in a hotel room, listening with high-strung hearts as their men fly warward overhead, perhaps forever.

Before the evening is over, you know—or think you know—more about the ins-and-outs, the ups-and-downs, of the Army Air Forces than the Army Air Forces knows about itself. Of course, you don't even begin to. But, what is vastly more important, is the fact that you know what the Army airman is, what the Army airman feels, what the Army airman thinks and what the Army airman stands for.

He's a swell guy; tough and gallant.

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In "Winged Victory" there are two acts and 17 scenes. These scenes range all the way from a back porch in Mapleton, Ohio, to a landing field in the South Pacific; from a Barrack street somewhere-in-America to a landing field somewhere-in-New Guinea; from a farmhouse in Oregon to a hangar in the desert. Superbly and simply designed by Sgt. Harry Horner, they are amazingly effective.

Under the direction of Sgt. David Rose, a large, well-balanced orchestra plays original and adapted music with skill and enthusiasm, while an equally large and well-balanced choir helps out under the direction of 2nd Lt. Leonard de Paur. The lighting of Sgt. Abe Feder is perfection.

The six young men whose flight career we follow are projected with professional finesse by Cpl. Mark Daniels as Allan Ross, Pvt. Dick Hogan as Frankie Davis, Pvt. Don Taylor as Pinky Scariano, Pvt. Barry Nelson as Bobby Grills, Pfc. Edmond O'Brien as Irving Miller (he of Brooklyn) and Sgt. Rune Hultman as Dave Anderson. These are our Air Force heroes, each, in his way, outstanding . . .

Now, as at the beginning, "Winged Victory" is masterly.

"A Connecticut Yankee"

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
November 18, 1943

Sir Galahad to the Rescue

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

THE news this morning is good for a change; another flower has managed to jut up among the cactus. Dyked out in partly new armor, our old friend the Connecticut Yankee, if a little slow in getting around, proves an entertaining, likeable and warm-voiced fellow. The Messrs. Fields, Rodgers and Hart have brought matters up to date (if that's the right phrase for a round-table romp laid in 543 A.D.) and what was most fetching in the old production has been blended with some nice things in the new one. Whatever its shortcomings, *A Connecticut Yankee* is in the tradition of sound and solid musical comedy.

The show is decidedly weakest toward the beginning. Rather surprisingly, it doesn't begin to kick up its heels until after its two most memorable songs—*My Heart Stood Still* and *Thou Swell*—have had their innings. Perhaps they come too early; perhaps they're too well known; more likely they suffer from the dullness of their surroundings. The modern prologue is certainly much too long, and the first scene in the knightly rounds is far too methinksy and forsoothy. But after that the fun begins and, except as the book slows it down from time to time, it shines on the rest of the proceedings. Two less hurdy-gurdied favorites from the old score stir up some new excitement. With Vera-Ellen—the brightest and cutest young thing that the season has so far popped into a musical—to sing and dance them along with Chester Stratton and Jere McMahon, both *On a Desert Island* and *I Feel at Home With You* sound as fresh as when they were written.

Mr. Rodgers' new music offers no topflight tunes, but one light number, *To Keep My Love Alive*, gives Lorenz Hart the chance to go to town with his wittiest and funniest lyrics in years, and Vivienne Segal puts the song across with really superb showmanship. It's the high point of the show. Mr. Rodgers also brightens the evening with *Ye Lunchtime Follies* of which the scherzo, so to speak, is a neat spoof of gooing into the mike.

The dance routines, while cut to familiar Broadway patterns, have liveliness and zest and give the show the kind of animation it asks for. The costumes are unabashedly gaudy, suggesting that Camelot was more like a circus than a court. The book is no triumph, but no tragedy; by now, it's pretty hard to give a fillip to anachronisms. The performers, for the most part, come through in good style. As Morgan La Fay, Vivienne Segal is a knowing siren, and her singing is always a model of clarity and ease. Dick Foran sings and acts the title role vivaciously. Julie Warren is a pleasant though not entirely adequate ingenue. Robert Chisholm makes a serviceable Arthur and John Cherry an amusing Merlin.

A Connecticut Yankee is a nice, clean, gay show, and something more than a straight revival.

'A CONNECTICUT YANKEE'

New adaptation of Mark Twain's story; music by Richard Rodgers, book by Herbert Fields, lyrics by Lorenz Hart; production designed by Nat Karson; staging by John C. Wilson; presented at the Martin Beck Theater by Richard Rodgers, Wednesday, November 17, 1943. The cast:

(In Hartford)

Lieut (j.g.) Kenneth Kay, USN.....Robert Byrn
Judge Thurston Merrill.....John Cherry
Admiral Arthur K. Arthur, USN, Robert Chisholm
Ensign Gerald Lake, USN, Chester Stratton
Ensign Allan Gwynn, USN.....Jere McMahon
Lieut. Martin Barrett, USN.....Dick Foran
Capt. Lawrence Lake, USN.....Stuart Casey
Lieut. Fay Merrill, Wave.....Vivienne Segal
Corporal Alice Courtleigh, Wac..Julie Warren

(In Camelot)

Sir Kay, the Seneschal.....Robert Byrn
Martin.....Dick Foran
The Demoiselle Alisande La Courtelloise (Sandy).....Julie Warren
Arthur, King of Britain.....Robert Chisholm
Merlin.....John Cherry
Queen Guinevere.....Katherine Anderson
Sir Launcelot of the Lake.....Stuart Casey
Sir Galahad, his son.....Chester Stratton
Angela, Handmaiden to Queen Morgan La Fay.....Mimi Berry
Queen Morgan La Fay.....Vivienne Segal
Sir Gawain.....Jere McMahon
Mistress Evelyn La Rondelle.....Vera-Ellen

"A Connecticut Yankee"

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
November 18, 1943

'Connecticut Yankee' Beautiful in a New Version at the Beck

By JOHN CHAPMAN

RICHARD RODGERS, whose melodies are such that one or another of them has been in my head most of the time most of these last twenty years, has turned theatrical manager and has given "A Connecticut Yankee" a beautiful new production.

This show of his, Lorenz Hart's and Herbert Fields' was first presented in 1927 at the relatively small Vanderbilt Theatre, and it ran for 418 performances. Last night's version was offered in the spacious, comfortable Martin Beck Theatre, and is not, Mr. Rodgers insists, a revival. It's a new version, and a big one.

I didn't see the old one, so this would be new to me anyway; and I found it lovely to see, lovely to listen to, played by some very engaging people and almost funny enough to satisfy me. It could, I guess, have been funnier, and once in a while I got tired of the half-modern, half-Arthurian argot which had people going around saying "Thou hast put me on the beam" a good deal of the time.

Twain Started It

Mark Twain started this whimsy with his "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court." He wrote what might have happened if a man got transshipped into a bygone age and took with him the knowledge of thirteen or fourteen centuries. John Balderston tried it much more recently when he wrote the haunting "Berkeley Square" and sent Leslie Howard into another time.

At the Martin Beck last night Dick Foran, an up-to-this-minute naval officer, is whisked to the era of Launcelot, Guinevere, Galahad and Merlin. Soon he has King Arthur's Court humming with jeeps, microphones, war factories and swing shifts, and courtiers and their ladies are indulging in the chiropractic benefits of the samba.

This Dick Foran, a big, pleasant red-head from the movies, is making his legitimate stage debut, and he is excellent as the Yankee. He sings easily, without bellowing, and you're glad to have him around any time he is on the stage. I imagine he does not give his role the brashness, the unctuousness, that William Gaxton gave it in the original production; but still he fills it well enough.

Best Song in Town

The Rodgers score has in it, of course, the best song in any show on Broadway—"My Heart Stood Still." There are four other musical numbers retained from the original production, including the lilting "Thou Swell."

By way of convincing us that this is a new show, Rodgers and Hart have written some new songs and a dance number, "The Camelot Samba." Best of these is not a melody, but a hilarious ditty of many verses sung by Vivienne Segal titled "To Keep My Love Alive." Miss Segal is the wicked Queen Morgan La Fay, and she warbles of how and why she did to death so many husbands. She has a good way with the right kind of song, has Miss Segal.

There is another song in which Chester Stratton burlesques Frank Sinatra, while the chorines swoon, which is amusing. Singing the duets with Foran is Julie Warren.

Putting in some welcome zip at times when the thee-thou stuff threatens to bog everything down are an attractive and accomplished pair of young dancers, Vera-Ellen and Jere McMahon. Vera-Ellen also has a well-executed adagio number with the men's chorus.

The settings and costumes by Nat Karson are boldly colorful and imaginatively contrived. John C. Wilson directed.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
November 18, 1943

Connecticut Yankee Limps Back

By BURTON RASCOE

A CONNECTICUT YANKEE, which enjoyed a gala opening at the Martin Beck last night, is not, properly speaking, a revival of the music show by the same name which ran for 418 performances on Broadway in 1927. It is another show entirely; new book by Herbert Fields; new songs and lyrics (plus four old ones) by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart; new principals; new chorus; new costumes; new scenery; new dances; new over-all conception and production.

Four great popular favorites among the song numbers of the old show have been retained—My Heart Stood Still, Thou Swell, On a Desert Island and I Feel at Home with You. But among the new songs there are two which equal the old ones—To Keep My Love Alive (a funny and clever mortuary song by Queen Morgan La Fay about how she disposed of her scores of husbands and the reasons therefor, delivered with hilarious effect by Vivienne Segal) and You Always Love the Same Girl (a melodious philosophical song, sung by Dick Foran and Robert Chisholm.)

Two Youngsters Score

Two youngsters, whose names are hardly discoverable in the program—Jere McMahon and a lass listed merely as Vera-Ellen—stepped right in at two points, once in the first act and again in the second act, and took the show away from the entire cast (including the featured Miss Segal and Mr. Foran) with sprightly song and dance numbers, including high competence in tap. In fact, for a reason I shall explain later, the show was dying on its feet for six numbers until these kids came on and livened up the proceedings. They were cheered and they drew the first encore.

The overture to any musical show sets the mood of the evening. The first overture of A Connecticut Yankee containing, as it does, a medley of familiar and much-loved tunes, should have lifted the spirits of every one into a mood at once nostalgic and gayly anticipatory. The lilts, in themselves, are lively and infectious. But they were played listlessly, without melody, lightness or life. The overture evoked only a faint bit of rather shame-faced applause. Consequently the curtain went up with a cold audience; the Messrs. Foran and Cherry and the Misses Segal and Warren froze in their songs, went nervous and almost lost their voices as well as their tonal ranges. They did not recover until after the young dancers came on.

More Noise Than Music

Mr. Hirst's strings and woodwinds are good but, with the exception of the first cornetist (who has a brief solo in I Feel at Home with You which he executed perfectly) the brasses and percussions—or rather the player at the drums and traps—seemed to work with no coordination with the strings. The drummer was so loud and so incautious with his symbols that he ruined the effect of young McMahon's finest effort by drowning out his taps, and otherwise provided more racket than rhythm, more noise than music. The orchestra handicapped the singers.

Jere McMahon so vastly enlivened the proceedings last night that it is a shame Mr. Meth and his boys weren't there to make the evening even more memorable. For A Connecticut Yankee, even as it is, is a highly enjoyable entertainment, lavishly produced, full of pretty girls, and spiced here and there with fun. The modernization includes a defense factory, with jeeps, women war workres, walkie-talkie phones and an imitation of Frank Sinatra by Chester Stratton, which got a big laugh and a big hand.

Mr. Foran was agreeable enough as Martin; but I wish his two youngsters had been there last night to tell pop to wipe that red stuff off his lips, which made him look like a sissy. That the audience was not more responsive was, I believe, due entirely to the orchestra. For the show, while not tops, is much above the general run.

NEW YORK SUN
November 18, 1943

Old Songs Again Hits in 'A Connecticut Yankee,' Presented by Mr. Rodgers

By WARD MOREHOUSE

IN the long, long ago of 1927—it was the era of Jimmy Walker and Coolidge and talking pictures were just beginning—there were sixty-odd plays on Broadway. George M. Cohan was in town; so were Katharine Cornell and Jane Cowl. Arthur Hopkins had a hit and so did Jed Harris, and Winthrop Ames was giving us an unforgettable production of "The Mikado." And into the Vanderbilt came "A Connecticut Yankee."

Now lower the lights for a time elapse of sixteen years. The month is November and the year is 1943, and back to town comes "A Connecticut Yankee," a new musical adaptation, opening last evening at the Martin Beck. This show marks the producing debut of Richard Rodgers, brilliant composer and a man with great love of the theater for all these years.

This new production will probably be a hit, but I found considerable tedium in the book. Let it be said at the outset that this production is not a revival. There are new songs, new costumes, new scenery, new people and new jokes. But the principal assets and the outstanding numbers are those two song hits of 1927—"My Heart Stood Still" and "Thou Swell."

"A Connecticut Yankee" brings back into business the firm of Fields, Rodgers & Hart. The production is a handsome one and Vivienne Segal is quite a girl to have around, but I didn't care for Dick Foran and found myself longing for the swagger of Billy Gaxton, who was the young man caught up in the gay goings-on in King Arthur's Court in the Broadway presentation of 1927.

I didn't feel last night that this new adaptation has the verve of the original production. The dance numbers, however, are splendid, the costumes fetching, the girls both pretty and tireless and Miss Segal, always a favorite with this department, is in her best form.

Dick Foran sings well indeed but is lacking in zest and stage assurance. Julie Warren is excellent as Sandy and there are moments when Vera-Ellen, a grand little dancer, just about steals the show. John Cherry and Robert Chisholm are effectively present, and so is Katherine Anderson, a dramatic actress straying for the time being into musical comedy. She gives authority and beauty to the role of the queen.

"A Connecticut Yankee" is beautifully mounted. It ran too long last night and should be cut, and it will be. It's a show that serves as another reminder of what a pleasant and forceful song-writing team the combination of Rodgers & Hart really was, and is. Certainly "Thou Swell" and "My Heart Stood Still" rank with their best contributions to musical comedy—and to the Broadway stage.

John C. Wilson has done the staging of this new production; Nat Karson has contributed the settings and costumes, and he's made a fine job of it. Of the new songs, probably the best is "To Keep My Love Alive," sung by Miss Segal.

You'll probably be fretful about the book for this new "Connecticut Yankee" but you'll like a lot of it, and it's good news indeed to have Fields, Rodgers & Hart in business again.

"A Connecticut Yankee"

NEW YORK POST
November 18, 1943

"A Connecticut Yankee" In a New 1943 Version

By WILELLA WALDORF

"A CONNECTICUT YANKEE," the musical comedy by Herbert Fields, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, based on Mark Twain's book, was originally presented, on a modest scale, at the Vanderbilt Theatre back in 1927, when its creators were young and gay and considered very promising.

Last night Mr. Rodgers himself produced a new 1943 version of the show at the Martin Beck Theatre, in the more lavish style to which he has become accustomed. Nat Karson's scenery and costumes are strikingly effective. The score, including several old favorites and some new ones, is far above the Broadway average.

Vivienne Segal as Queen Morgan LaFay has one new number, "To Keep My Love Alive," which she delivers in the inimitable Segal manner and which is worth the price of a seat all by itself. Add some spirited stepping by two uncommonly beguiling youngsters, Vera-Ellen and Jere MacMahon, and you have more assets than most of the local theatres can offer in this boom season.

If the rest of "A Connecticut Yankee" matched its better moments, we should probably be sending up rockets today. As it is, we must indulge only in modified rapture. Not having experienced the original, or 1927, performance, we can only report on what went on last night. Much of it struck us as a rather tony college musical got up by a bunch of the boys from the Dramatic and Musical Clubs, with the campus football hero playing the Yankee, and a flock of co-eds brought in to lend glamour to the proceedings.

Song Hits of '27

Mr. Rodgers' music is often very lovely, and as it is orchestrated by Don Walker and played by the orchestra under George Hirst, it is generally something to hear. But those two big song hits of 1927—"My Heart Stood Still" and "Thou Swell"—are disappointingly projected by Dick Foran and Julie Warren.

Mr. Foran is a genial young giant from the movies who gets off his wise-cracks breezily enough, and possesses a pleasant if hardly spectacular singing voice. But as soon as he has a song to tackle, he becomes very self-conscious and is immediately afflicted with wax-works gestures. Since Miss Warren is able to give him little help, and is vocally very weak, the two popular hits have all the vitality and zip of lukewarm soda pop.

We might have been able to throw off the impression of a campus musical even so, were it not for Mr. Fields' book and some of Mr. Hart's less inspired lyrics. Never having read Mark Twain's story (cries of "Shame! Shame!"), we cannot say how much the fault is Mr. Fields'. Some of the patter is very amusing, notably that spoken, with just the proper nasty inflection, by Miss Segal. But quite a lot of it is the sort of thing the Senior Class wit turns out for the Commencement extravaganza.

Now and then Mr. Hart sounds as if he too were still an undergraduate. We'll forgive Mr. Hart, though, for he also wrote "To Keep My Love Alive," Miss Segal's new song.

Queen Vivienne

In case we seem to be dwelling unduly on Miss Segal, it is because "A Connecticut Yankee" leans on her so persistently that it often seems in danger of falling into a light slumber when she isn't on hand to give it a sly poke in the ribs to wake things up.

John Cherry as Merlin is a merry old party, Robert Chisholm and Katherine Anderson lend authority to the regal doings of the evening, while Robert Byrn and Chester Stratton handle their singing assignments earnestly, Mr. Stratton breaking down at one moment to gurgle meltingly into a microphone Sinatra-fashion while the young ladies of the chorus swoon in ecstatic heaps.

Mr. Rodgers must be a very modest, retiring fellow. Perhaps a shade too modest. Here he is the producer of the show, and his music is one of its major assets. Yet several of his songs suffer from poor projection, or, in the case of Miss Segal's prologue number, from miscasting, if such a thing can be said of a song-number. He even has the ditty called "You Always Love the Same Girl" done as a duet by the Messrs. Chisholm and Foran, both baritones.

But what of it? Go hear Miss Segal sing "To Keep My Love Alive," which will soon have dozens of verses. And watch those attractive youngsters, Vera-Ellen and Jere MacMahon, dance. During the milder stretches, Mr. Karson's scenery and costumes are wonderfully eye-filling.

NEW YORK TIMES
November 18, 1943

THE PLAY IN REVIEW
"A Connecticut Yankee"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

THEY brought back "A Connecticut Yankee" to the Martin Beck last evening, and on the whole it was quite good fun. Any musical which has Richard Rodgers tunes has won about half its battle by the time the orchestra has finished the overture, but this one does not stop dead at that point. For in offering his first gesture as a manager, the same Mr. Rodgers has bedecked his show with colorful costumes and good settings and has filled his stage with people who obviously are cheerful about taking the Mark Twain trip from Hartford, Conn., to the Court of King Arthur.

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"A Connecticut Yankee" first saw Broadway earlier this same month in the year 1927, and it gave to the world which still is hearing them the songs "My Heart Stood Still," "Thou Swell" and others. In getting ready for the new version Mr. Rodgers, Lorenz Hart and Herbert Fields—the latter two the lyricist and librettist respectively—have brought the story up to date. That means there are Wacs and Waves, a Lunchtime Follies, modern ditties and other items showing it is 1943. The book of "A Connecticut Yankee" is not its best feature, however, for the first part of the show is inclined to drag, and moments all through its length are not so funny as they would be in the best of all possible worlds.

Since musicals are for singing, on to the important business. The Messrs. Rodgers and Hart have retained five of the songs from the first production, the two mentioned above and "At the Round Table," "On a Desert Isle" and "I Feel at Home With You." To these they have added a number of others: "To Keep My Love Alive," which is a pretty wonderful tale told by a lady who has been killing her husbands; "Can't You Do a Friend a Favor," and some more. They are in Mr. Rodgers' amiable style, and in Mr. Hart's best mood—the one which rhymes "cantaloupe" and "antelope" and thinks nothing of it.

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Of the performers, there first of all is Vivienne Segal, as Queen Morgan La Fay, and, more important, a singer who can give Mr. Hart's lyrics a chance in such a number as "To Keep My Love Alive." As the Yankee there is Dick Foran, who started last evening rather woodenly, but later on took things less seriously. His is the role William Gaxton had in the original cast; Mr. Foran lacks the Gaxton bounce. Julie Warren is the Sandy—partner of Mr. Foran in the "My Heart Stood Still" number, which still is the hit song of the show. The young lady who, last evening at least, put the most life into the musical was Vera-Ellen, not the greatest singer in the world but certainly one of the world's most engaging performers as a dancer or minor comedienne.

Nat Karson was in charge of the scenery and costumes, which are bright and gay, as they should be in a musical show, and William Holbrook and Al White Jr. staged the dances, which are not outstanding but are satisfactory. In his direction John C. Wilson has not always disguised the fact that the book is feeble, but in musicals books lead only into dances, choral singing and parodies of the Lunchtime Follies—in which, by the way, Mr. Sinatra gets a slight going over—and that likely is all that matters. For "A Connecticut Yankee" is pretty to look at and agreeable to hear, and Mr. Rodgers has offered it with the same care with which he writes his songs.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
November 18, 1943

Kill the Fatted Calf

By HOWARD BARNES

THE team of Mark Twain and Richard Rodgers is still going strong. Even in a rather ponderous revival, "A Connecticut Yankee" is pleasant to watch and very good, indeed, to hear. Herbert Fields and Lorenz Hart, to be sure, have had a hand once more in shaping the Twain classic to the book and lyric demands of musical comedy. They have brought the show sharply up to date in the revival at the Martin Beck, putting the principals in uniform as well as suits of armor and tossing off more than one strictly contemporary quip. But it is the fantasy of the original yarn and the gracious Rodgers melodies which make "A Connecticut Yankee" a delight, sixteen years after its first success on Broadway.

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Those who remember the Twain-Fields-Rodgers-Hart collaboration in the era of wonderful nonsense will take more than passing pleasure in the rendition of such songs from the original offering as "My Heart Stood Still," "Thou Swell," "On a Desert Island" and "I Feel at Home With You." Since Rodgers has added half a dozen more tunes to the piece and Hart has equipped them with sly rhymes, the show lacks next to nothing in the musical department. The dancing is expert, with some rather sensational turns by a girl who calls herself Vera-Ellen. If the proceedings have a tendency to grow soporific at times it is because the book has labored the Twain fable rather than letting it take its course.

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Moreover the chief players do very little to recapture the excitement and peculiar charm which have a way of evaporating after a show's first success. Vivienne Segal, playing a Wave in prologue and epilogue, and Queen Morgan La Fay in the King Arthur's court scenes, takes a long time getting into the spirit of the nonsense, even though she is excellent in such new numbers as "To Keep My Love Alive" and "Can't You Do A Friend A Favor?" Dick Foran, in the title role, is brash but not properly bewildered, when he gets conked at his bachelor party and wakes up 1,400 years earlier in Camelot.

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The comedy throughout the revival stems from Twain rather than the current production. It is bright enough to leaven some dull passages at the Martin Beck. The notion of a prescient Yankee tangling with Merlin is first-rate comic currency any time that it is twisted to the devices of showmanship. With the wonderful old and new songs which the musical boasts, it makes the newest Broadway presentation eminently acceptable. Incidentally, Robert Chisholm plays King Arthur, Katherine Anderson is in the part of Guinevere, Stuart Casey struts around as Launcelot and Julie Warren looks pretty as Alisande. They are not nearly as effective as the dancing ensembles in giving "A Connecticut Yankee" vitality. Take the original conceit and the songs in this latter-day musical exhibit and you have the show. I suggest that they make a good one.

"A Connecticut Yankee"

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
November 18, 1943

'Connecticut Yankee' Back After 16 Years

By ROBERT GARLAND

AFTER sixteen years, fourteen days, and I wouldn't exactly know how many minutes, the justly celebrated musical-comedy version of Mark Twain's "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court," returned last night to the Broadway scene. At the commodious Martin Beck, an overflowing, orchidaceous and, I regret to say, partially disillusioned congregation was on hand to receive it with outstretched arms.

Streamlined, brought down to date and more outspoken than of yore, "A Connecticut Yankee" is a good deal skimpier in humor than we, the more nostalgic of its customers, had remembered it to be. Especially in the second stanza.

Adapted by Herbert Fields, to lyrics by Lorenz Hart and music by Richard Rodgers, last night's resuscitation was first produced by Lew Fields and Lyle Andrews at the Vanderbilt Theatre on the evening of Nov. 3, 1927. For 418 performances it ran. William Gaxton and Nana Bryant had the leading roles—he the Yankee; she Queen Morgan La Fay—entrusted last night to Vivienne Segal and Dick Foran.

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Last night's was a big and boisterous production, while I remember the earlier one to have been intimate and quiet. Even so, the story remains the same. For it was Mark Twain's whimsy to imagine that a young man on his wedding eve—sixteen years ago, he was known simply as Martin; today he is Lt. Martin Barrett, USN—is knocked out cold by his bride-to-be.

Frankly, I think he has it coming to him. But that is neither here nor there. What is both here and there, however, is the fact that his bride-to-be, who is a lieutenant and a Wave, has been superseded by a corporal, who is a Wac. The Wac is also a lap-sitter. Knocked out cold, Lt. Martin Barrett is mentally translated back to King Arthur's Court, of which in his peacetime moments, he is very, very fond. And the lieutenant, who is a Wave, and the corporal, who is a Wac, are transferred right along with him. This most certainly isn't being square to the Round Table, as someone up on the stage of the Martin Beck so wittily remarks.

To his delightful original score, Richard Rodgers has added several numbers in the modern temper. One of these is "To Keep My Love Alive," which Vivienne Segal puts over with great aplomb and many a double-meaning. For my money, Miss Segal is the outstanding person in the show, singing and playing with the new-found comedic effectiveness which made her memorable in "Pal Joey" and "I Married An Angel."

There are two skillful and likable young dancers whom I hope are Vera-Ellen and Jere McMahon. From the programs, I can't be altogether certain. Julie Warren is a curiously attractive Sandy, known in and around Camelot as The Demoiselle Alisande La Courtelloise.

The older musical numbers—"My Heart Stood Still," which must have given Jerome Kern the idea for "I Told Every Little Star," and "Thou Swell"—remain tuneful and engaging. And there's "The Camelot Samba" to put things in the groove . . . The brand new version of "A Connecticut Yankee" is a big, handsome and melodious show. Maybe my memory is mistaken, and it never was exactly an aisle-roller after all.

"Lady, Behave"

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
November 17, 1943

Misbehaving

By HOWARD BARNES

SEVERAL likable performers took an awful licking at the Cort Theater last night. They were trapped in a supposed farce called "Lady, Behave!", which starts off by being incredibly dull and gradually adds vulgarity to its tedium. Condolences are in order for such principals in the offering as Pert Kelton, Carol Stone and Jack Sheehan, who are asked to grope their way through the murky ineptitudes and innuendoes of this Alfred L. Golden piece. Let me assure them, though, that the going was no easier on the other side of the footlights.

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Perhaps the author had a play idea in his supposition that any one can set up practice as a psychoanalyst, given a bit of front and management. He is reputed to be a student of psychology and he tosses off all sorts of glib phrases about hypnotic suggestion, complexes and neuroses during the proceedings at the Cort. They make little sense in any terms. They make no sense at all as entertainment. Some old double-entendre jokes from burlesque are the best bits of amusement that derive from the central theme, which should give you a rough notion of the play's quality.

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Miss Stone, for example, is asked to run through a series of suggestive exercises in a doctor's office and neck with an iceman, while supposedly under hypnotic influence. She is definitely not funny. Neither is Miss Kelton, who does more than any other single member of the company to rescue fragments of gayety from the production. Sheehan, as the fake psychoanalyst, has one or two moments of mild pleasantry, as he turns from a frustrated little clerk into a high-priced society practitioner, but even he is gagged by most of the dialogue. It is that sort of dialogue in an extraordinary tastless show.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
November 17, 1943

Audience Walks Out on Lady, Behave!

By BURTON RASCOE

A large sign in front of the Cort, where a nauseating ineptitude, entitled Lady, Behave! opened last evening, announces that a new Saroyan play will occupy the theater next week. If these were not abnormal times in the theater I should say this was not a refreshing bit of candor on the part of the management of Lady, Behave! but, instead, a rather pathetic burst of optimism that Lady, Behave! would last 24 hours, much less a week.

To all intents and purposes, for about a third of the audience, the play closed after the first act last night. They left and didn't come back. Another lucky contingent joined the absentees after the second curtain. As punishment for our sins, some of us had to sit through the play's run of three consecutive acts. It seemed longer than the run of Tobacco Road.

But times are not normal in the theater; a vast number of people, with large rolls of spending money, for whom theater-going is a novelty, are battling their way to the box offices and, when they can't get tickets to the worthier shows which are smash hits, they take tickets to whatever is available—even things like Lady, Behave!

And, moreover, this tawdry and singularly tasteless farce has, inherently, an idea so smutty and so corny and some jokes so familiar to the ear-benders of the elbow-bending places that, if it had more pace and more pornography in it and could keep out of quarantine, it might conceivably join the dubious company of such fabulous and distressing phenomena as Maid in the Ozarks and Ladies Night in Chicago.

Buf for the sort of people who queue up for autographs, drop 10 nickels at a time into juke-boxes and go to the theater only because they are tired of playing slot-machines or to get in out of the rain, I suspect that Lady, Behave! is at once too slow-moving and too esoteric. For it concerns the ministrations of a quack psychiatrist upon various female patients, writhing, as Percy Hammond used to say, in the throes of gender, and it is difficult to imagine that those who might enjoy some of the more obvious allusions would also know what a psychiatrist is, much less understand the references to Freud, Jarcot and the literature of psychopathia sexualis.

In the play, an ineffectual accountant, whose wife has divorced him because marriage had taken the ambition out of him, is persuaded by his ex-wife and a married man, who has promised her a job but doesn't seem to have one himself, to pose as a psychoanalyst in order to rake in the easy money of a nerve-specialty quack, whose furnished flat the clerk has taken when the quack had to leave town because an irate husband did not like the kind of treatments the quack was giving his wife. The clerk, who had been reading the quack's books in his leisure while his wife has been in Reno, undertakes the deception in hope of winning his wife back; but success goes to his head and he begins to believe utterly in his own charlantry.

Such a farcical notion, shrewdly, cleverly, wittily treated, brilliantly cast and directed and produced with taste and distinction might easily be a fine entertainment. But Alfred L. Gordon, author of Lady, Behave! has debased the idea, using it as a utensil for all the old jokes about nerve specialists and their patients; and he has also directed it as though it were meant for stag night. Thomas Hume and Lois Dow, who are probably highly competent actors, are going to have to live down the roles they are required to play in this show and the way they are required to play them. Maybe the others will, too.

"Lady, Behave"

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
November 17, 1943

'Lady, Behave!' a Hopeless Case Unless a Spray Gun Might Help

By JOHN CHAPMAN

THE Cort Theatre program says, "The Aerozonator Air Purifier and Soaperior Liquid Soap Dispensing System used in this theatre are made by the U. S. Sanitary Specialties Corp., New York and Chicago."

I have an idea that if the janitor of the house would send for an extra supply of the stuff and use it on the stage, a comedy called "Lady, Behave," which opened there last night, would go away. Maybe it would die.

A man named Alfred L. Golden wrote "Lady, Behave." Here are two of his jokes:

Lois Dow says, on exiting, "I must be off." Pert Kelton says, "I'm sure you must be."

Karl Weber says, "She's got in the neighborhood of a million bucks." Says Miss Kelton, "A nice neighborhood."

The plot has Miss Kelton, Mr. Weber and Jack Sheehan renting a furnished apartment from a psychiatrist and taking over the doc's business. Sheehan becomes the professor and treats a variety of cases, including an oversexed widow who has a mania for cutting men's clothing with scissors, and an inhibited ice man who loves to carry a bomb but can't work up the nerve to throw it.

'LADY, BEHAVE!'

Farce by Alfred L. Golden; staged by Mr. Golden; setting by Frederick Fox; presented by High Bennett at the Cort Theater, Tuesday, November 16, 1943. The cast:

George Morton	Jack Sheehan
Roland Talbert	Karl Weber
Louise Morton	Pert Kelton
Margaret Bannington	Lois Dow
Mike Rogers	Thomas Hume
Mrs. Lansing	Madge Skelly
Miss Jones	Norma Winters
Miss Shaw	Carol Stone
Dr. Baker	J. Warren Lyons
Inspector Weiskopf	Dan Niels

In the second act Sheehan treats two customers—the ice man and Carol Stone—by hypnotizing them. He keeps telling them they are sleepy. Maybe he wasn't just acting, because I nearly fell asleep before the actors did.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
November 17, 1943

Farce 'Lady, Behave!' Arrives at the Cort

By ROBERT GARLAND

IT seems a pity that three such nice people as Jack Sheehan, Pert Kelton and Carol Stone had to memorize all those practically useless words that were spoken right out loud last night at the Cort Theatre. For "Lady, Behave!" had its premiere there in the presence of a defeated and steadily diminishing congregation. And Mr. Sheehan, Miss Kelton and Fred Stone's daughter Carol had to bear the brunt of the onstage conversation, although Thomas Hume was also among those present.

As written by Alfred L. Golden, produced by High Bennett and staged by Mr. Golden, "Lady, Behave!" has to do with a fake psychoanalyst and the mad-as-a-hatter morons who pretend to be his patients.

The story tells how George Morton and his wife, Louise, take over an apartment in New York City that was once occupied by a Dr. Baker. Dr. Baker, who went in for psychoanalysis in a biggish sort of way, left all his books behind him. So, with nothing else to do, George Morton and his wife, Louise, decide to take up where the missing quack left off, practicing on his patients. In case you're still interested, they also go in for hypnotism and various other forms of medical mumbo-jumbo.

There is a lady from Park Avenue who is yearning and yearning and yearning for a man. There is another lady who loves nothing quite so much as running hither and yon with a pair of scissors in her hand, snipping off bits of men's clothing now and then. There is scarcely a normal person on that 48th Street stage.

All this yearning and snipping goes on for two of the three acts into which "Lady, Behave!" is divided. Then, to cap the climax, the real Dr. Baker arrives, goatee and all.

Seeing how much fun everybody is, the piece is supposed to be having, he, too, wants to play. And play he does, aided and abetted by ladies with their clothes on, ladies with their clothes off, ladies who have been hypnotized, ladies who have not been hypnotized, and three such nice and respectable actors as Jack Sheehan, Pert Kelton and Carol Stone trying to make it all seem very, very daring and very, very gay.

Frankly, it is neither.

NEW YORK TIMES
November 17, 1943

THE PLAY IN REVIEW
"Lady, Behave!"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

"LADY, BEHAVE!" which opened last evening at the Cort, probably is the "Hairpin Harmony" of the non-musical stage. To say that it is bad is to state the clinical details as gingerly as possible, and with the kindest of bedside manners. For in writing of a group of persons consulting a fake psychiatrist, Alfred L. Golden has turned out a play which has succeeded in being tasteless most of the time when it is not just dull. A group of players, in general not unknown to the local stage, looked last evening more than a little foolish as they went about their work.

Mr. Golden's psycho-analyst is a milquetoast sort of man who has rented the apartment of a psychiatrist and sets about getting some patients of his own. Item: A woman who goes around snipping clothes. Item: An ice man who is trying to get over an inhibition against throwing bombs. Item: A Park Avenue girl who wants a man. Item: An actress of tragic parts who is told to join a burlesque chorus to get over whatever it is that ails her. Jack Sheehan is the phoney doctor, Pert Kelton is his divorced wife who becomes his secretary, Lois Dow, Thomas Hume, Madge Skelly and, of all people, Carol Stone, play other parts. There was a fleeting thought in the audience that the lady with the scissors might serve a more charitable purpose if she came down and began snipping off ears this side of the lights.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
November 17, 1943

New Entry for the Dunce Cap

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

HAIR-SPLITTERS may contend, if they like, that *Victory Belles* or *Hairpin Harmony* is still the worst play of the season; but for rich gruesome repulsiveness *Lady, Behave!* need fear no rival, now or for a long time to come. This little ogre of a farce tells of a creature named Morton who poses as a psychoanalyst and attracts to his medical couch an actress given to exhibitionism, a lady with a draughty memory, an iceman who carries a bomb, and a jittery lady who goes around snipping things with scissors. Needless to say, each and every one of these is also sex mad. At first they are treated one by one, but by the middle of Act II they have assembled in a body and their libidos go in for ensemble work.

Perhaps there exists some comic genius who could make all this amusing, though I doubt it. Mr. Golden has made it both excruciatingly dull and singularly cheap. His dialogue is made up of the sort of double meanings that would shame a high school locker-room, and when the wit takes a more spotless turn it runs like this:

"Where in Heaven have I seen you before?"

"I don't know. What part of Heaven do you come from?"

There is surely no need to discuss the unfortunate cast in this little dossier.

NEW YORK POST
November 17, 1943

"Lady, Behave!" Thinks Neuroses Are Amusing

By WILELLA WALDORF

ALFRED L. GOLDEN, author of "Lady, Behave!" produced last night at the Cort Theatre, is under the impression that nervous disorders and mental diseases are uncommonly funny, and that their treatment by a quack who knows nothing about psychiatry is funnier still.

It is quite probable that a certain number of people haunting the Broadway district these evenings agree with him, in which case they have only to buy a ticket and register unrestrained mirth at the spectacle of the lady who goes about with a pair of scissors snipping pieces off everybody's clothes, or listen happily to the tale of a young iceman who was once frightened by a cantaloupe and is now leading a frustrated life because he is unable to bring himself to the point of throwing a bomb he carries around with him in a shoebox.

Jack Sheehan, Pert Kelton, Carol Stone, Thomas Hume, Madge Skelly, Lois Dow and other players of undoubted talent give this their professional attention for three acts, which is more than we were able to do.

It is during plays like "Lady, Behave!" that we begin to brood darkly over the state of the drama and wonder how actors stand the strain season after season.

They're paid to stand it, of course. But not enough. Equity. Not enough.

"Lady, Behave"

NEW YORK SUN
November 17, 1943

'Lady, Behave,' Another Gimcrack, Arrives at the Cort for Bed and Breakfast

By WARD MOREHOUSE

WELL, you can't say the Cort Theater doesn't keep trying. All season it has been providing transients with bed and breakfast and it was in there pitching again last night, but its luck was no better. Another theatrical gimcrack, this one entitled "Lady, Behave!" reached its stage, and it was pretty dreadful.

But wait. There's a girl in the show, Pert Kelton, who manages now and then to get the best of her material. She has a dry, quiet, laconic touch. Her method is of the Jean Dixon-Lee Patrick style of playing, and that's a school which is all right with anybody. You will recall Miss Kelton from "Guest in the House," and you will be hearing from her as a comedienne if a script ever comes her way. I commend her heartily to managerial attention.

There's an actor at the Cort, too, one Jack Sheehan, who can be quite a likable fellow when he isn't overwhelmed by part and play, as he is in "Lady, Behave!"

It's Mr. Sheehan's task to portray a diffident sap who wants to win back his divorced wife and who takes over a psychoanalyst's office, poses as the doctor, and then proceeds to treat a procession of freaks. Success note: He gets the wife back.

"Lady, Behave!" be it recorded, is the work of Alfred L. Golden; it is presented by High Bennett; the setting is by the busy Frederick Fox, and the cast includes a young woman who bears a famous stage name. Her given name is Carol. Her father played in "The Wizard of Oz" and you've probably guessed by now.

Broadway's booking congestion is such that "Lady, Behave!" will have to vacate after Saturday evening's performance to make way for Saroyan. Until last night's opening it had plans for moving next week into the Ambassador. I feel certain that any management with the courage to bring such a farce to Broadway will stick to its plans.

"Lady, Behave!" is just one more for the incredible list.

"The Innocent Voyage"

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
November 16, 1943

Children Capture a Pirate Ship In Charming 'Innocent Voyage'

By JOHN CHAPMAN

IF what you like in the theater encompasses the gentler humors, good feeling and imagination, you will be going to see Paul Osborn's "The Innocent Voyage," which the Theatre Guild presented last night at the Belasco.

The Guild, which had us drama lovers and its stockholders moaning and groaning a couple of seasons back, now has on Broadway "Oklahoma," "Othello" and last night's fantasy about six children who are the most bloodthirsty and melodramatic folk aboard a pirate ship. This is a trio of offerings worth anybody's respect as having high purpose and integrity.

I don't think "The Innocent Voyage" will be the box office block-buster the other two are, for sometimes its imagination runs thin and it seems to be wondering what it can do next. It misses the continuously hypnotic charm of Mr. Osborn's memorable venture into the faintly real, "On Borrowed Time"—but it still has more pleasant playgoing moments in it than most of the rest of this season's dramas and comedies.

Two A-1 Performances

One reason for this is that it has a couple of Grade A-1 performances and that the level of the helping cast is never low. If you haven't quite forgotten your childhood and still would like to love a pirate, you can go to the Belasco and love Oscar Homolka. And 11-year-old Abby Bonime, as a lass who has to commit and honest-to-gosh, hysterical and beautifully bloody murder, gives one of those performances that only a confident 11-year-old could turn out.

Mr. Homolka is the skipper of a pirate ship off Jamaica in 1860. It is his business to board other vessels (by disguising some of his crew as ladies in distress) and loot same, so that he can take his plunder to the nearest Caribbean port and hold an auction. It puzzles him when people object to losing their goods. "They are so possessive!" he exclaims in bafflement. He had wanted to be a preacher, but his father was a pirate and when his father died he took over the business.

When Homolka and his Spanish-speaking rabble loot one ship they come into possession, by mistake, of five English children and a half-breed girl who are being sent back to England from Jamaica because there are too many hurricanes in the latter place.

No Place for Kids

It is indeed a mistake. The children, ranging in age from 7 to 16, are delighted to be on a real pirate ship; but the pirates do not take delight. The children are a definite handicap to the innocent pursuit of taking supplies from other ships. They have to be treated with kindness, washed and kept from sliding down hatches so they won't wear out their only clothes. And they have a funny way of becoming likable.

The play is from the novel, "A High Wind in Jamaica," by the English writer, Richard Hughes. I've not read the book so do not know just what were the problems Mr. Osborn faced when he decided to make a play of it. But there must have been some that were hard to lick. I cannot quite understand or accept, for instance, the presence of the 16-year-old half-breed, who starts out as fey and winds up with her mind quite gone.

The pirates are captured, of course, and the children rather unwillingly rescused, and Mr. Homolka and his men are going to have to hang for murdering a Swedish ship captain; for of course nobody will believe little Miss Bonime when she says she did it.

Herbert Berghof, as Homolka's child-loving, button-sewing first mate, is engaging. The other youngsters—Dean Stockwell, Guy Stockwell, Mary Ellen Glass and Carolyn Hummel—are all normal children of unfathomable imagination. Lois Wheeler plays the unfortunate half-breed, and Clarence Derwent is a seagoing British investigator who fails to understand what really did happen to the children.

The convincing shipboard sets are by Stewart Chaney. Mr. Osborn directed.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
November 16, 1943

The Innocent Voyage a Dramatic Triumph

By BURTON RASCOE

PAUL OSBORN, as far as this department is concerned, stands forth today as the white-haired boy of American drama. For his achievement in turning Richard Hughes' unique and unearthly masterpiece of fiction into a strange, gripping, beautiful and poignant tragedy is so extraordinary a feat that it amounts to a triumph of genius, sensitivity and vision over incredible difficulties.

This seems to be the Theater Guild's year. To their regnant glories, Oklahoma and Othello, must now be added a third outstanding contribution to the things current playgoers should be thankful for—The Innocent Voyage, which opened last night at the Belasco.

Anyone who has read The Innocent Voyage will immediately perceive the depth and breadth of Mr. Osborn's dramatic resources in translating that novel to the stage. For, in the first place, there is scarcely any dialogue in the novel. In the second place, Mr. Hughes' great achievement lay in his uncanny insight into the minds and emotions of six highly individualized small children and in his cold-blooded, almost diabolical, depiction of what went on in the minds of those children.

A Great Novel

The novel is unquestionably a masterpiece—one of the great novels in any language. It is sui generis, unlike any other book. But in it Mr. Hughes achieved *sav* cool and clinical a detachment that even the aloof and dispassionate Stendhal might have shuddered at some of the passages in it.

Obviously it was impossible for Mr. Osborn to follow the novel too faithfully. What is tolerable in fiction is not always tolerable on the stage. I know I should have been horrified if the Emily of the novel were allowed her final ghastly triumph when she might have saved the lives of innocent men by her confession. It would have been too bleak and terrible a final curtain. Mr. Osborn has contrived an ending which while not a "happy one," at least is one that has warmth, tenderness, insight and dramatic conviction.

The story, if you are unfamiliar with it, concerns some children of English colonists in Jamaica in the year 1860 who, following a disastrous hurricane, are sent back to England by their parents, who fear to have them undergo such dangers again. The clipper taking them back is boarded by a crew of the dwindling race of pirates. In commandeering the cargo the pirates, much to their dismay, find themselves incumbered with the children; the captain of the clipper, in fright, has sailed away without the kids, to turn in a horrendous report about how the bloodthirsty ruffians overpowered him and murdered the children.

As in the novel, the terrible pirates find themselves, in effect, taken captive by these even more terrible childdren, because their innocence is something pirates can't cope with. The captain is all for drowning them like rats, for he has forebodings that the children will mean his doom; but his sentimental first mate, Otto, soon is acting as mother and nurse to the brood.

In making one last haul the captain uses the children as a front; but the skipper of the invaded ship is thrown aboard the pirate ship, bound and gagged while the looting proceeds. . . . On their return they discover, to their unholy consternation, that the skipper has been stabbed to death by one of the children, whom they believe to be the oldest—a half-witted half-breed girl. . . . That means they will be hanged for murder, for no jury would believe the true story.

This drama is marvelously well depicted by a cast headed by Oscar Homolka as the rugged pirate captain, ably supported by Herbert Berghof as his first mate and by Abby Bonime as Emily (all three of whom take special honors) and by a group of other kids and adults ably directed by the author. The costumes by Aline Bernstein and the scenery by Stewart Chaney are colorful and right. The production is distinguished in every way.

"The Innocent Voyage"

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
November 16, 1943

The Guild Scores Again

By HOWARD BARNES

THE stage has taken on a challenging job at the Belasco. In "The Innocent Voyage" it has sought to recapture the magic and violence of an essentially literary fantasy about children, pirates and staid grown-ups. Paul Osborn has translated the Richard Hughes novel with considerable perception and imagination. The Theater Guild's production is immaculate, while the youngsters and adults in the company could scarcely have been bettered. All in all, this newest play of the season is an engrossing, amusing and curiously moving show. For those who do not know the fine original from which it stems, that should, and undoubtedly will, be amply sufficient.

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What Osborn, in both his writing and his staging, has succeeded in doing is to establish the irrational and rather fearsome world in which aware children live. He has not always given his play the continuity and dramatic accents that it might have had, but the acid test of his chemistry is the fact that the Belasco offering builds steadily and with emotional clarity. Since the interpreters of the production fumble very little of his best dialogue and construction, "The Innocent Voyage" comes off handsomely. It may not be as memorable, disturbing, or what you will, as "High Wind in Jamaica" (the original title of the Hughes book), but it is easy to sit in on in these lean days of play-going.

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Obviously, the play chops down the novel to stage size. There is no hurricane at the Belasco, but there are the brash and appealing youngsters being sent back from the West Indies to England in 1860 and there is an absorbing account of their strange adventures. Most of the scenes take place on the pirate ship which they take over in gleeful manner after their boat has been boarded. Most of the work's spell revolves around their relationships with their captors. The author has underlined the humor in his theme. In the climax he weaves humor and violence into something more than sheer showmanship, as a little girl confesses to killing the captain of a merchantman which the pirates have attacked.

• • •

If I were an actor, I would hate to pit my adult skill against the intuitive make-believe of a child. Oscar Homolka, who has had more than one triumph in the past, is constantly being overshadowed in "The Innocent Voyage" by little Abby Bonime. As the eleven-year-old, who becomes devoted to a pirate captain and fights every one who comes between them, she achieves the blend of pre-adolescent courage and unreasoning action which is the key to the play. Homolka is very good indeed as the pirate captain, particularly in the final scenes of the play. Herbert Berghof, Clarence Derwent and assorted small fry fill in the acting panels splendidly. Meanwhile Aline Bernstein has costumed the show sumptuously and the Stewart Chaney sets are just what they should be. My guess is that the Theater Guild has still another hit on its hands.

'THE INNOCENT VOYAGE'

Play by Paul Osborn, dramatized from the novel of Richard Hughes; staging by the author; settings by Stewart Chaney and costumes by Aline Bernstein; production supervised by Lawrence Langner and Theresa Helburn; presented by the Theater Guild at the Belasco, Monday evening, November 15, 1943.

The cast:

Mrs. Thornton ..... Norah Howard
Mr. Mathias ..... Clarence Derwent
Mr. Thornton ..... Guy Spaull
Captain Marlpole ..... Ralph Cullinan
Mate of the Clorinda ..... Edgar Kent
Rachel Thornton ..... Carolyn Hummel
John Thornton ..... Dean Stockwell
Emily Thornton ..... Abby Bonime
Edward Thornton ..... Guy Stockwell
Laura Thornton ..... Mary Ellen Glass
Margaret ..... Lois Wheeler
Captain Jonsen ..... Oscar Homolka
Otto ..... Herbert Berghof
Magistrate of Santa Lucia ... Boris Marshalov
Swedish Captain ..... Arvid Paulson

Clorinda Crew: James Goode, William Foran, Don Lee, Dan Lounsbery, Philip Sheridan, Norman Scheffer, John Roche.

Dodson Crew: Alcides Briceno, Nick Dennis, Harron Gordon, Bruce Halsey, John Monk, Orin Jannings, Peter M. Kass, Red Towne.

Stevedores at Jamaica: James Alexander, Albert Popwell, Cherokee Thornton, Daifmore Akeisa.

NEW YORK TIMES
November 16, 1943

THE PLAY IN REVIEW
"The Innocent Voyage"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

RIGHT at the start there are a number of good things to be said for Paul Osborn's new play, "The Innocent Voyage," which he derived from the Richard Hughes novel also known as "A High Wind in Jamaica." In the first place it is out of the run-of-mine theatre, during these days a major credit. Then, too, it enables Oscar Homolka to give an excellent performance in the leading role, as well as offering other members of the cast some good characterizations to work at for a change. But, unfortunately, the good things are not all that must be said about "The Innocent Voyage," the brutal truth being that the evening at the Belasco is not a fully satisfactory evening in the theatre.

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The story of "The Innocent Voyage" is of a group of children who are inadvertently kidnapped by pirates, on board the pirate ship throwing the pirates into confusion and, afterward, trying to save them. Mr. Osborn in his dramatization seems to have been uncertain whether to stress the natural comedy of a group of tough citizens trying to control a group of tougher children or to bear down on the melodrama brought about by the murder of a captured Swedish captain. The result is that after a slow first act, through which he doesn't have to face the problem, he has a second that is part comedy and part melodrama and a third which sums it up in neither category.

Normal children on a pirate ship would immediately wish to be pirates, which Mr. Osborn realizes but which he expresses without the naturalness of his Pud in "On Borrowed Time." When one of the children, terrified, stabs the Swedish captain, the whole mood is changed instantly to one of horrified hysteria. That, too, is obviously normal, but it does not blend with the air of fantasy which has gone before. And a good many people may find that the character of Margaret, the half-caste girl kidnapped with the children, detracts from the potential charm of Mr. Osborn's evening. She is thrown to the crew, becomes a slut, witnesses the murder, loses her mind—and probably has no place in "The Innocent Voyage."

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That over, it is a pleasure to return to Mr. Homolka. He plays the pirate captain as though he were to the Spanish main born. He is tough, overbearing—and at a complete loss in dealing with the children, uncertain how to go about it but hoping they will like him. He gives the play most of the fantastic quality it has before stepping into melodrama. Herbert Berghof as his mate also is good, as is Clarence Derwent as admiralty judge trying to prove either piracy or murder. Of the children, Abby Bonime has the chief role, befitting a young lady of 11 and for the most part plays it very well. Hysterics are a little hard to come by before audiences at the age of 11.

Mr. Osborn has directed his play, doing perhaps better with the elders than with the children, for those of the audience having a houseful at home may find the group on the stage a little less natural than their own. Stewart Chaney has designed some splendid settings and the Theatre Guild, as producer, has given "The Innocent Voyage" every chance to take a trip. It makes a good attempt but does not fully do so.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
November 16, 1943

Small Kids vs. Captain Kidds

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

OF Richard Hughes' bold and brilliant novel Paul Osborn has made rather a better play than I supposed was possible—a play that has some of the merits of the original, and some of its own. But the fact remains that the play not only falls far short of the book, but differs from it and to a large extent obscures its meaning. The result is pleasant enough, but it falls between two stools. *The Innocent Voyage* will not win any great popular following, and will not quite satisfy the connoisseur.

Mr. Osborn is as faithful to a not too "dramatic" story as his sense of drama will permit. *The Innocent Voyage* remains a tale of some small children of the last century who, on their way from Jamaica to England, fall to the lot of some pirates who attack their ship. There is the neat surface comedy of their bedevilling the life out of their lawless but tender-hearted captors as well as the eventual drama of young Emily hysterically murdering a Swedish captain whom the pirates have taken prisoner. Thereafter the plot undergoes changes; but it would be unfair to reveal what happens, and it is enough to say that the last act of *The Innocent Voyage* has its own kind of interest and suspense.

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Dramatically, Mr. Osborn has brought his play into some rough kind of focus, and worked up some passable climaxes. What is far more important, of course, is the treatment of the remarkable Thornton children; and on his own terms, M. Osborn has often handled them effectively. He has made the younger ones cute, but not too cute; he has caught some of the fun in the children's assured approach to the pirates and in the pirates' bewildered approach to the children. And he has tried, with some success, to project Emily from the inside out; particularly to reveal her half-childlike, half-grownup sense of things. Much of this is quite unhackneyed; but little of it becomes the searching, shocking voyage of exploration that *The Innocent Voyage* was as a book.

For in the book, beneath the piquant comedy of innocent children causing an uproar in the lives of hardened pirates, there lies exposed the strange, secret, unpredictable, amoral nature of childhood. The children *are* innocent but they are also monstrous; full of dissimulations and treacheries, of abrupt impulses and concealed emotions. A pirate's belching appals them, but his villainies they take in their stride. In the book, Emily is terrifying; in the play, she is merely terrified. In the book, the "innocent" behavior of these children turn the moral universe on its ear; in the play, it merely suggests that youngsters have their secrets and can give us pause.

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The production is a pretty good one. Eleven-year-old Abby Bonime plays Emily remarkably well, and all the smaller children play nicely. As the pirate captain, Oscar Homolka is quite good at times, but on the whole uneven. Clarence Derwent plays an investigator for the Crown deftly, and Herbert Berghof makes an effective pirate mate. Stewart Chaney's shipboard sets are attractive, and Aline Bernstein's period costumes are charming.